

Message Text

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AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMEMBASSY TANANARIVE
AMEMBASSY TEHRAN
CINCPAC
DIA WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L MOSCOW 11298

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR, UR, US, XO
SUBJECT: SOVIET VIEWS ON INDIAN OCEAN

1. SUMMARY. IN REMARKS ON INDIAN OCEAN JULY 14, USA INSTITUTE
NAVAL SPECIALISTS:

-- STRESSED IMPORTANCE OF IO AS TRANSIT LINK BETWEEN
SOVIET EAST AND WEST AND ATTACHMENT TO FREE PASSAGE;

-- OFFERED EMBRYONIC THOUGHTS ON RELATIONS OF "ZONE OF
PEACE" CONCEPT TO FREEDOM OF PASSAGE;

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-- DISTINGUISHED BETWEEN "STRONG" U.S. RIGHTS TO DIEGO

GARCIA AND -WEAK" SOVIET RIGHTS IN SOMALIA;

-- ASKED ABOUT MEDITERRAEAN DENUCLEARITZATION, BUT WERE PESSIMISTIC ON PROSPECTS FOR NAVAL LIMITATION TALKS IN GENERAL.

IN CONTEXT OF QUESTIONS ON FATE OF CONGRESSIONAL PRESSURE TO MAKE IO ARMS LIMITATION INITIATIVE PRECONDITION FOR DIEGO GARCIA FUNDING, RETIRED RADM YASHIN STRONGLY AFFIRMED SOVIETS ARE WAITING FOR AN OFFER, AND WILL NOT REFUSE TO DISCUSS ANYTHING. THIS SUGGESTS ONE EXPLANATION FOR BREZHNEV CHALLENGE: SOVIETS MAY HAVE WISHED TO PREEMPT CONGRESSIONALLY-MANDATED ADMINISTRATION INITIATIVE BY GOING ON RECORD FIRST WITH A POSITION WHICH MAKES "BASES" FIRST AGENDA ITEM FOR NEGOTIATIONS, BUT ALSO KEEPS DIEGO GARCIA IN LIMELIGHT IF NO NEGOTIATIONS COME OFF. END SUMMARY.

2. DURING CALL AT USA AND CANADA INSTITUTE JULY 14 BY EMBOFF, DAO REP AND VISITING INR RESEARCH OFFICER GOODMAN, POLITICO-MILITARY DEPARTMENT SECTION CHIEF G.I. SVYATOV. MEMBER RADM (RET) B.D. YASHIN, AND INSTITUTE SCIENTIFIC SECRETARY V.N. KREST'YANOV (NOW ON SABBATICAL) MADE FOLLOWING POINTS ABOUT INDIAN OCEAN AND NAVAL ARMS LIMITATIONS IN GENERAL.

3. YASHIN STRESSED IMPORTANCE OF AREA TO SOVIETS AS SEA LINK BETWEEN EASTERN AND WESTERN PARTS OF SOVIET UNION, AND INSISTED THAT COMPLETION OF SECOND TRANS-SIBERIAN RAILWAY (BAM) WOULD NOT DIMINISH ITS IMPORTANCE IN THIS RESPECT.

4. HE LAID ALMOST EQUAL STRESS ON FREEDOM OF TRANSIT FOR ALL VESSELS, AND GAVE IT A PECULIAR TWIST BY CLAIMING THAT SOVIETS DO NOT MAINTAIN PERMANENT FORCES IN THE AREA. SVYATOV AND KREST'YANOV, FOR THEIR PART, DID NOT DENY THAT SOVIET NAVAL PRESENCE CONSTITUTES DE FACTO "SEMI-PERMANENT" FORCE, WHATEVER ITS FORMAL STATUS. KREST'YANOV ARGUED THAT IT WAS THERE IN RESPONSE TO U.S. PRESENCE, AND PREDICTED, IN CONTEXT OF SUPPORT FOR ARMS LIMITATIONS TALKS WHILE THERE IS STILL TIME, THAT U.S. WOULD INCREASE ITS PRESENCE AND SOVIETS WOULD TOO. ARMS LIMITATIONS IN AREA ARE MORE CONFIDENTIAL

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DIFFICULT NOW THAN FIVE YEARS AGO, MAINLY BECAUSE OF DIEGO GARCIA, AND WILL BE MORE DIFFICULT TEN YEARS HENCE.

5. ASKED ABOUT REASONS FOR REAFFIRMATION THIS YEAR OF SOVIET INTEREST IN INDIAN OCEAN, IN BREZHNEV'S SPEECHES TO 25TH CONGRESS AND DURING GANDHI VISIT, KREST'YANOV CAREFULLY NOTED THAT SOVIETS HAD MADE NO FORMAL GOVERNMENT PROPOSAL OF TALKS TO USG, BUT THAT CHALLENGE TO FOREGO

BASES STOOD. (ALL THREE SOVIETS HELD TO DISTINCTION BETWEEN SOMALIA FACILITIES AND DIEGO GARCIA "BASES" ON FORMAL GROUND THAT RIGHT TO USE OF DIEGO GARCIA INVOLVED PERMANENT PRESENCE.) YASHIN, AT THIS POINT, PRESSED FOR NEWS ON FATE OF ATTEMPT BY SENATOR KENNEDY AND OTHERS TO MAKE DG FUNDING DEPEND ON U.S. EFFORT TO NEGOTIATE ARMS LIMITATION IN AREA, INCLUDING FIRMLY THAT "AS I KNOW, SOME PEOPLE HERE" ARE STILL WAITING FOR A U.S. OFFER. WHEN IT WAS POINTED OUT THAT TALKS INVOLVING BASES WOULD BE UNEQUAL GIVEN SOVIET DESIRE TO EXCLUDE SOMALIA FACILITIES BY DEFINITION, YASHIN REPLIED THAT SOVIETS WOULD NOT REFUSE TO DISCUSS "ANY QUESTION."

6. ASKED ABOUT EFFECT OF "ZONE OF PEACE" CONCEPT WHICH REAPPEARED IN SOVIET-INDIAN DECLARATION ON FREEDOM OF TRANSIT, YASHIN SAID CAREFULLY THAT HIS IMPRESSION WAS THAT "ZONE OF PEACE" WOULD INVOLVE "REGULATION" OF TRANSIT RIGHTS, SUCH AS DEFINITION OF TYPES OF VESSELS (HE MENTIONED BLECHMAN'S IDEA OF INDIAN OCEAN DENUCLEARIZATION FAVORABLY) AND PERHAPS ALSO DURATION OF STAY, BUT NOT "LIMITATION" ON RIGHT OF FREE PASSAGE. HE WAS UNWILLING TO DEAL FURTHER WITH POTENTIAL CONTRADICTION BETWEEN UNLIMITED FREEDOM OF PASSAGE AND SPECIAL REGIME FOR OCEAN AREA.

7. SVYATOV PRESSED FOR VIEWS ON POSSIBILITIES FOR NAVAL LIMITATION TALKS THIS YEAR, AND ASKED SPECIFICALLY WHETHER AND HOW U.S. MIGHT RESPOND TO RESURRECTED SOVIET PROPOSAL FOR MEDITERRANEAN DENUCLEARIZATION. DUSTY ANSWERS HE GOT EVOKED STATEMENT THAT HE WAS PESSIMISTIC ABOUT POSSIBILITIES NOT ONLY THIS YEAR BUT AFTER U.S. ELECTIONS, AND HE QUOTED WESTERN PRESS STATEMENT THAT NAVAL LIMITATIONS ARE NOT POSSIBLE SO LONG AS ONE SIDE FEELS IT IS SUPERIOR.

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8. COMMENT. SOVIETS DEMONSTRATED NAGGING PESSIMISM CONCERNING REAL POSSIBILITY FOR PROGRESS TOWARDS ARMS LIMITATIONS IN INDIAN OCEAN IN FORESEEABLE FUTURE, BUT THREE OTHER ELEMENTS ARE ALSO WORTH NOTING. FIRST, THEY REITERATED NOW-STANDARD POINTS IN SOVIET PRIVATE COMMENT ABOUT IMPORTANCE OF SEA LINK BETWEEN EUROPEAN AND FAR EASTERN PORTIONS OF USSR AND ATTACHMENT TO FREEDOM OF

PASSAGE, AND WERE UNCLEAR ABOUT HOW "ZONE OF PEACE" CONCEPT ACCOMMODATES LATTER. SECOND, REPEATED DISTINCTION BETWEEN "STRONG" U.S. RIGHTS TO DIEGO GARCIA AND "WEAK" SOVIET RIGHTS TO SOMALI FACILITIES, AS WELL AS SVYATOV'S QUOTE ON SUPERIORITY, TENDS TO SUGGEST THAT SOVIETS FEEL THEMSELVES INFERIOR IN INDIAN OCEAN. THIRD, FACT THAT YASHIN IMPLICITLY LINKED CONGRESSIONAL PRESSURE FOR ARMS LIMITATION INITIATIVE AND

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